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ABSTRACT

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Displacement and Knowledge Construction in Literature Reviews

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Abstract

Two literature reviews are interpreted to demonstrate how they're informed by what the author labels the "displacement story," that is, a story of how one prevailing professional paradigm is replaced by another. This study demonstrates how the narration, structure, and language in each review render particular tellings of the displacement story. The authors of the first review claim a "revolution" in research about reading comprehension as the old paradigm, the behavioral, is replaced by the new, the cognitive. Authors of the second review describe a more evolutionary displacement in psychology as the study of individual cognition gives way to the study of cognition in social contexts. This study also demonstrates what the author labels the interpretation of professional literature, as a complement to its evaluation, and the author argues that interpretive knowledge and skills would be beneficial to consumers' critically reading of professional articles.

Displacement and Knowledge Construction in Literature Reviews

This paper reports a study of written discourse. One purpose is to demonstrate how two literature reviews treat a common story, the "displacement story," a story of how one way of thinking in a professional community is displaced by another. It's a familiar story. It's rooted in western mythology, and it's now part of professional landscapes upon which Thomas Kuhn has left an indelible mark. Kuhn's reconceptualization of scientific progress in terms of scientific revolutions is a story of displacements. "Each of them [scientific revolutions] necessitated the community's rejection of one time-honored scientific theory in favor of another incompatible with it . . . each transformed the scientific imagination in ways that we shall ultimately need to describe as a transformation of the world within which scientific work was done" (1970, p. 6). Indeed Kuhn's counter to diachronic views of scientific progress is itself a displacement.

Displacement is also familiar as an underlying story in many literature reviews (including meta-analyses, integrative reviews, critical reviews, and other review types) because in professional literatures they are so often a visible part of the process by which one point of view is being ushered out and another heralded in. For example, in "Moving from the Old to the New: Research on Reading Comprehension Instruction" (1991), Dole, Duffy, Roehler, and Pearson claim that the behavioral paradigm, so long influential in comprehension research, has given way to more cognitive-based research and current research on teaching. Similarly, Levine and Resnick chronicle the evolution of psychology as a study of individual minds to current psychology as a more general endeavor embedded in social activity. The once pervasive idea that cognition is largely a solitary act has been displaced, they claim, by the "new field of sociocognition" (1993, p. 603).

A second broader purpose also motivates this paper: to demonstrate the

process of interpreting a professional text (in this case the two literature reviews mentioned above). Interpretation, which I'll briefly define as the close reading and analysis of the language and form of a text, may seem out of place applied to professional discourse, something done to poetry or fiction but not, say, to a study on dyslexia reported in the Reading Research Quarterly. This attitude would be especially pervasive in the professional world in which I operate (education and counseling) where soon-to-be-consumer graduate students are taught the critical evaluation of articles reporting research, but not--as I've defined the term--their interpretation. I'd argue that interpretation complements evaluation and therefore the knowledge and skills for interpreting professional texts should also be part of the critical reading arsenal those students take back to the world of practice. Reading a text interpretively enhances one's understanding of the text thus providing a better basis for subsequent learning and application. In addition, an interpretive reading of a text contributes to a better understanding of the forces which influence the content and patterns of a text and, by extension, which influence readers' own meaning making processes as they read texts. These skills take on a special importance in professions, such as education and counseling, where the knowledge constructed and communicated is primarily cast in written language.

The choice of literature reviews used for this study was somewhat arbitrary. Any text can be interpreted. But there was also some design. Among professionals, literature reviews are unrivaled as a means of keeping up, especially in an era where both information and the access to information have "exploded." Moreover, they provide the kind of knowledge claims not available in articles reporting individual studies. In part, review claims are unique because (depending upon the specific type of review) they provide some sort of overview and synthesis of a large body of individual studies and reports. They "identify trends that are unlikely to

emerge in any single study, however broad or well designed" (Light & Pillemer, 1984, p. 144). But their uniqueness also lies in their potential to not only reflect the patterns of a literature but also influence and shape them. There are two takes on this review potential. It could be inherent in synthesis which is Tushnet's position: ". . . whatever method is used [for literature synthesizing], the result is something different from the individual studies comprising the basis of synthesis. In short, the result is a new construction of reality " (1992, p. 6). Or it could be a sociopolitical which Meyer assumes: "The writer of a review shapes the literature into a story in order to enlist the support of readers to continue the story" (1991, p. 45). Either way, the critical reader must realize that reviews are more than mirrors of a literature. They and the knowledge claims they forward are part of the knowledge construction process.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how two literature reviews are informed by the displacement story. However, a broader second purpose also motivates my reporting this study. Consumers' critical reading of professional literature is largely defined as an act of evaluation; but interpretation complements evaluation, and this report is intended to demonstrate the kinds of insights interpretation allows.

Method

The two literature reviews chosen to satisfy both of these purposes--Dole, Duffy, Roehler, and Pearson's "Moving from the Old to the New: Research on Reading Comprehension Instruction" (1991) and Levine and Resnick's "Social Foundations of Cognition" (1993)--were chosen because they both seem especially strong candidates for influencing the direction of thinking in their specific disciplines, reading and psychology. They both appear in influential publications, the Review of Educational Research and the Annual Review of Psychology, and they both are authored by (or at least sponsored by) notable researchers.

At a broad level, my analysis was organized around story, narration, structure, and language as they were manifested in each review. After reading for comprehension, I summarized both articles and categorized them as examples of displacement stories. Then I considered the narrators in the two reviews, their role and how (or whether) they changed as the review preceded. Then I reread, paying closer attention to the structure of the reviews and then to the language and rhetorical choices made by the authors. These choices and their relationship to structure were analyzed and interpreted as they related to story and readers' construction of meaning.

However it should be noted that the actual analysis was not such a tidy, progressive journey through each of these four components. Analysis was more circular than linear with the concept of two different versions of the displacement story inductively becoming the governing principle. Specifically, I looked for repetitions and/or oppositions in such matters as word choice, overall structure, paragraph development, shifting authorial presence, images, metaphors, motifs, types of citations, how references were used, metadiscourse, verb tense, function of topic sentences, perspective (point of view), and so on. Patterns began to emerge, especially in the structure and language of the texts, and the patterns began to be named in terms of concepts embedded in the two different displacement stories. Form connected with concept to make meaning.

What follows as "Results" is a summary of how this inductive, disorderly activity finally organized itself around the story, narration, structure, and language of each review.

Results

Story

At one level, Dole and Levine tell the same story; one way of understanding has been displaced by another.

Doles' story goes something like this. For much of this century, behavioral psychology has dominated research about learning and reading processes; and, as is common, the prevailing psychology has also dominated practice. Behaviorism had an especially strong influence on instruction in reading comprehension which, under behavioral allegiances, was largely a matter of teaching comprehension sub skills determined from task analyses of reading. Cognitive psychology dramatically changed this picture, advancing a view of the reader as active rather than passive, as one who constructed rather than found meaning in text. With this change came a change in pedagogy. The objective was not to teach skills and sub-skills, but to help readers learn how to use knowledge and strategies for making sense out of text. Cognitive psychology has replaced behaviorism as the determining mode in comprehension instruction.

Levine's story has a different starting point but its syntax and meaning run a similar course. Cognitive psychology, so Levine claims, has traditionally been a psychology of the individual with researchers seeking to delineate how individual minds work. Working in this tradition, researchers have developed complex models of the thinking mind--always with the assumption that cognition is primarily an individual thought process. Over time, however, this perspective has been displaced (or is being displaced) by another which places cognition in a social context and new models and new frames for understanding human thought have emerged.

But at a deep level their stories differ. Even though both claim a paradigm shift of sorts, a displacement of one understanding with another, they treat these shifts differently. Dole's story is more of a revolution; the new has replaced the old.

Levine tells a story that's more about evolution; the old has evolved into the new. Dole conveys the impression that "they" (the old) were wrong and "we" (the new) are right. Levine's story is more about progress and causes and effects, a conversation carried forward by right-minded people seeking to understand.

In part, this deeper story is told directly by the narrators of each story, especially in the introductory and concluding sections. But it's also told--and perhaps more powerfully--by the different structure and language in each.

Narration

The persona in the Dole review is a "we" (representing, I assume, the four authors) as is that in the Levine review (two authors). Each review follows the convention of obvious authorial presence in the introduction, providing the reader with information about review methodology and the nature of the report to come:

> Dole Introduction"In this article, we review and synthesize the research on comprehension and its teaching . . . we explore . . . we trace the history . . . we ask two questions . . . we propose . . . we first consider . . . we close" (1991, p. 239).
>
> Levine Introduction "In this chapter we develop a point of view that treats cognition as a fundamentally social activity . . . we expand and elaborate . . . we discuss . . . we ignore the boundaries . . . we are illustrative rather than exhaustive . . . we consider five ways . . . we explore . . . we review" (1993, pp. 587-589).

Although the same voice continues to tell the story through the body sections of the reviews, the explicit "we" disappears and doesn't emerge until the concluding section in each. But this time it's a more reticent "we," especially in the Dole review. They use distancing constructions when reporting results and conclusions (such as the passive "teaching is viewed . . ." or the anthropomorphized "the research synthesized here suggests . . .") and speak explicitly only when considering

further research ("more awaits our study . . . we need research on the role that . . ."). This distancing, of course, is not uncommon in narrative reviews and is a continuation of the review conceit that in body sections the literature "speaks for itself."

But it is in these sections of the review (where the literature is speaking for itself) that the authors' presence is more subtle and the deeper stories of evolution and revolution unfold.

Structure in the "Social Foundations" Review

Excluding the introduction and conclusion, Levine's story has five parts, each labeled as a major section in the paper itself:

Mere Presence of Others

Social Roles, Positions, and Identities

Mental Representations of Others

Social Interaction and Cognitive Change

Cognition as Collaboration

The broad movement here is roughly chronological, tracing research and theory through several decades. But only roughly. Citations in the first section, for example, begin in the mid 1960's (with a few earlier precursors briefly cited), but in fact a good share of the citations are from the 70's, 80's, and 90's. The next three sections follow a similar pattern--featuring the 70's, 80's, and 90's with a sprinkling of earlier studies. The last section is located somewhat more in the present with all citations in the 80's and 90's.

It is, in short, possible to attribute some of the ordering to the principle of chronology. More telling, however, is the thematic ordering which complements the deeper story of reasonable evolutionary displacement.

The title of the first section, "The Mere Presence of Others," is immediately followed by "The most rudimentary way in which social factors influence cognition

is via the simple presence of others" (p. 588). Words like mere, rudimentary, and simple presence underscore how the unit of psychological analysis is still the cognition of the individual, and the relationship under study is how others' presence can influence and impinge upon that individual cognition. The next two body sections carry this theme further--the first reviewing research about how individual cognitive activity is influenced by how people "construe the social situation in which they find themselves" (p. 591), the next reviewing research about how one's cognition is affected by one's "mental representation of others" (p. 593). The three sections represent an almost lock step progression from the concrete of the first section (the actual physical presence of others), to the more abstract of the second (the concepts constructed when in social situations), to the most abstract of the third (the models people construct in their minds). The progress here is subtle. The impingement in the first two sections depends upon the presence of others; in the third "others" is totally an affair of the individual mind. The socialization of the mind is on its way.

In the fourth section Levine moves the story ahead quickly. Drawing upon thinkers such as Mead and Vygotsky, Levine repeats their proposals that "people's fundamental capacity for thinking, as well as the forms their thinking takes, are created in socially shared cognitive activities" (p. 595). This is not just an assertion that individual thinking is influenced by an individual's construct of social factors; it's a stronger assertion that the very cognitive machinery one has to think with, the "capacity" and "forms" for thinking, are internalizations of such social processes as conversation and argument. In the fifth section, the cognitive and social are, as Levine says, "fused, a challenge to the assumption that cognition is exclusively an individual act, clearly distinguishable from external social processes that may influence it" (p. 588). In this section, the social unit (such as a lab or group) is the unit of analysis, not the individual. Levine claims that this section (along with the

fourth) "signal most clearly the future of the new field of sociocognition that we believe is emerging . . . the distinction--between interaction that stimulates cognition and interaction that constitutes cognition--may be less crisp as the field continues to develop" (pp. 603-604).

Thus the Levine structure supports a story of displacement. The paradigm that directed cognitivists to the study of individual cognition in a vacuum has given way to one that insists on the social. But the displacement was not a war, not a revolution. It was (and is) an evolving process propelled by advances in research and theory.

Structure in the "Reading Comprehension" Review

In contrast, the displacement story told by Dole, et al is of revolution, there was a war of sorts, a war in which "old" and "new" become linked with "they" and "we" and "wrong" and "right."

The structure serves to reinforce this harsher story. To the extent that heading and sub-heading systems serve as guides, Dole's review has four major sections in addition to the introductory and concluding sections:

Historical Origins of Current Comprehension Instruction

A Cognitively Based View of Reading Comprehension

Components of Comprehension Curriculum: What Should be Taught?

How Should the New Curriculum be Delivered?

As in the Levine review, the chronology of the structure has some significance. The first section establishes the behaviorist underpinnings of current comprehension curriculum and instruction. The next describes the cognitive view which has displaced behaviorism, and the next two sections review literature that illustrates what should be taught from a cognitive perspective (strategies instead of skills) and how it should be delivered (the curriculum). Indeed the structure not only reflects the displacement, it reinforces how convincing the displacement has been.

Behaviorism receives four paragraphs in section one, one of which is the introduction, another very short, and a third containing one of the two long direct quotes in the paper, a quote of a "doubting Thomas" who never bought into the behavioral definitions of reason. In other words, behaviorism really doesn't get much of a chance to "speak for itself " in this review.

But, also as in the Levine essay, the chronological ordering is perhaps not as important as the thematic. Whereas the thematic ordering in Levine's story moved progressively from the effects of individual cognition to a strong case for social cognition, the ordering in this story operates more on the principle of juxtaposition. What counts is contrast, not continuation. The behavioral past is held up from time to time, not as a root or a step but as a contrast, a foil against which the cognitivists rebelled and won. Consider, for example, what the authors present as contrasting views of the reader: "The traditional [behavioral] view assumes a passive reader who has mastered a large number of sub skills and automatically and routinely applies them to all texts. The cognitive view assumes an active reader who constructs meaning through the integration of existing and new knowledge and the flexible use of strategies to foster, monitor, regulate, and maintain comprehension" (p. 242).

Similar contrasts exist throughout the review. Under the "old" psychology, readers are "passive recipients of information" reading to "reproduce . . . [the text's] meaning." Under the "new" they use existing knowledge to actively "build, or construct, a model of meaning from the text" (p. 241). From a behaviorist perspective, "skills are "more or less automatic routines . . . associated with lower levels of thinking and learning . . . [connoting] consistency, if not rigidity, in application"; from a cognitive perspective, "strategies" (not skills) are what should be attended to in education. Strategies are "inherently flexible and adaptable". . . [they] "emphasize reasoning" . . . and they're deliberately chosen by "good readers"

(p. 242). The authors depict an old paradigm teacher as a "director and manager of practice"; a new paradigm teacher, in contrast, is "a mediator who helps students construct understanding " (p. 252).

In summary, of the two structuring principles chosen by review's authors--chronology and contrast--the latter carries more force. The authors use the principle of contrast to bolster their claim that one paradigm has not only displaced another, it's also better than the other. This, of course, contrasts with Levine's use of the past. In one, the old has evolved into the new. In the other, the old has replaced the new.

Language in the Two Reviews

Much has already been said about language in the discussions about the narrator and structure of each review. And much more could be because the language and other rhetorical choices made by the authors further constitute and reinforce the different stories of displacement.

Each review has a brief introduction and each review follows a similar format in establishing a context, defining a niche or problem in that context (hence a reason for the review), and proposing how this review will fill that niche. But the language choices in each is telling. For example, the context is established by Levine with phrases such as "continuing debate," "pressed the field toward," and "first step"--all phrases which suggest a rational and progressive displacement. That kind of language isn't used in Dole's contexting. Instead, Dole talks of "significant advances," how old views "conflict with current views," and educators needing to "rethink previous concepts."

These differences continue as the story unfolds. Through repetition and opposition, Dole builds two sets of words and images in opposition to one another:

Behavioral	Cognitive
behavior	complex
passive	strategies

drill	interpret
repetition	flexible
order	interactive
programmed instruction	knowledge
task analysis	adaptable
routine	intentionality
old	integrate
reproductive	new
assembly line	novice
hierarchy	expert

It's not that each of the words in the behavioral column is negative and each in the cognitive positive. It is instead that Dole builds two paradigms of words, words that get clustered together by being associated with one paradigm or the other. Thus a word like hierarchy , itself a relatively connotation free word in most people's lexicon, becomes guilty by association, as it were, when gathered together with words such as passive or drill that do carry more connotative meaning.

In contrast to Dole's building of two distinct word and image sets, Levine's language choices tend to blur distinctions between the new and the old, thus reinforcing the story of academic exchange and progress. For example, consider the following:

> Page 586--pressed the field toward, continuing debate, must now agree, took cognitive psychology on a first step. etc.
>
> Page 587--We expand and elaborate our previous ideas, several disciplines are also contributing to our understanding, recent work reflects this growing understanding, etc.
>
> Page 589--Baron has proposed an alternative, yet another explanation, fifteen

years after Triplett's paper, etc.

Page 591--several lines of research suggest that, has a long history, in an early study of, more recent studies provide additional evidence, etc.

This is typical language in the Levine story. A sense of continuity and history is developed, a sense of academic exchange and debate, and--when "old" ideas and studies are reported as being replaced by "new"--it's done with a sense that the process will continue. In the setting described by Levine, newness is a transient state.

Indeed the conclusions of the two imply much about the present and future of the new paradigms each has described. Consider the first few lines of each:

Dole "As a result of recent research on the reading process and on teaching, a new model of comprehension instruction can now be envisioned, one quite different from the traditional model currently in use in most schools. In rapid retreat [underlining mine] is the view that comprehension ability consists of the independent sequential development of a set of hierarchically related skills. . . Reading is now viewed as an active process . . . in which readers construct a model of the meaning that represents, to some degree, the meaning intended by the writer " (p. 255).

Levine "Our selective review . . . documents the many ways the social and the cognitive interpenetrate and interact in human functioning. The last two sections of our review signal most clearly the future of the new field of sociocognition that we believe is emerging" (p. 603).

From the Dole perspective, the old is in rapid retreat and the new is here, something that can be "envisioned." The old paradigm which allowed one way of viewing things has been replaced by another from which "comprehension ability is better viewed as a process of emerging expertise . . . scaffolding can be viewed as the complement of emerging expertise . . . learning is viewed as an active, constructive

process . . . and, teaching is viewed as another active, constructive process" (pp. 255-256). From this view, the authors extrapolated five principles which could be used as a beginning framework for reading comprehension instruction, and they establish four directions for future research inherent within this view.

Things are different from the Levine perspective. They believe and communicate that things are still in progress: "This distinction . . . may become less crisp as the field continues to develop" (p. 604); that argument and exchange are inherent in the construction of professional knowledge: "we are prepared to argue that all mental activity . . . involves either representations of other people or the use of artifacts and cultural forms that have a social history" (p. 604); that scholarly activity is historical and contextual: "Palincsar & Brown's work is part of a broader movement to apply Vygotskian and related theories of situated cognition to education" (p. 604); and that life and scholarly activity isn't (or shouldn't be) as partitioned as it might appear: "In the messy 'real world' it is difficult to imagine any situation that is purely cognitive . . .engagement with real-world problems can blur disciplinary boundaries between cognition and social behavior" (pp. 604-605). Whereas the authors of the Dole review are suggesting that future researchers look inward within their own new paradigm for application and research, Levine's call is for more of a look beyond.

Discussion

It will be remembered that the purpose for reporting this study is twofold--to demonstrate how two literature reviews tell the story of one professional community displacing another and, the more general purpose, to demonstrate a process of interpretation which could complement the evaluation of professional literature by consumers. Regarding the first, the common cry could be raised that narration, structure, and language could support other stories besides the displacement story. An archetypal story of rebirth, for example, or a social story of

forces and counter forces could have provided the subsuming categories. I agree. But I'd counter that concern on two levels. First, to see that possibility as a problem is to confuse what E. D. Hirsch, Jr. saw as "the art of understanding" and the "art of interpreting" (1967, 1984) They're two separate functions. Hirsch sees interpretation, explicating the "significance" of a text from the perspective of external contexts, as a necessarily garrulous process allowing multiple interpretations; but--and this is a central point in Hirsch's hermenuetics--"significance always implies a relationship, and one constant, unchanging pole of that relationship is what the text means" (1967, p. 8). Thus, at the center of interpreting, for example, the Dole text as a displacement story or a story of rebirth is the intended meaning of that text regardless of which interpretation is articulated.

It is in fact that central intended meaning, however consciously or unconsciously the authors were aware of signaling it, which leads to a second level of countering. Professional documents are also social texts, that is, they have a function in a sociopolitical context. They're complex cultural and psychological artifacts constructed, as Potter and Wetherell (1987) put it, "in particular ways to make things happen" (p. 3). Social texts "do not merely reflect or mirror objects, they actively construct a version of things; they do things" (p. 4). From this perspective the displacement story is both a supportable and illuminating perspective (as opposed, say, to a rebirth perspective). It not only accounts for and unifies a preponderance of formal elements within both texts (elements of narration, structure, and language), it also foregrounds specific realities constructed by the authors which will influence readers' constructions of meanings. The knowledge claims in these two reviews are not being conveyed in neutral conduits of narration, structure, and language. Those elements are part of the claims being made.

The second purpose for reporting this study eminently practical. Evaluation

and interpretation complement one another as tools for critical consumers; and, I believe, both should be standard fare in graduate schools such as mine where educators and counselors are being prepared to enter the world of practice. Ignorance of such matters as the constitutive nature of genre and language leaves one at a disadvantage in not only understanding fully what's being read, but also being able to learn from it and apply it wisely. As I've mentioned earlier, an interpretive reading of a text can contribute to a better understanding of the forces which influence the content and patterns of a text and, by extension, which influence the meaning constructed by individuals and groups of individuals within a professional discourse community. Interpretation, like evaluation, can serve well the consumer of professional texts.

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